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Enforcement

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 8, 1982

RECEIVED

Ms. Anne Gorsuch
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Waterside Mall
401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20460

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REGION I
OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL &
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Dear Administrator Gorsuch:

As you know, I have serious concerns over the omission of New Bedford Harbor from the Agency's Superfund priority list.

I am again writing to you on this issue because new information leads me to believe that the problem is even more serious than originally anticipated. Recent soil sediment samples taken in New Bedford Harbor have identified areas in which concentrations of polychlorinated biphenyls exceed 190,000 parts per million, or 19%. These measurements were obtained from the mud-flats area of the harbor -- an area which is easily accessible, and therefore presents a serious human exposure problem, particularly during low tide.

In addition, volatilization of PCBs in this area, especially during the summer months, has resulted in alarming levels of the chemical in the air, and an immediate health hazard to surrounding residential neighborhoods. A number of concerned residents have contacted me complaining of an increase in the incidence of various health problems in the area, including certain forms of cancer. Levels of PCBs in blood samples taken from some New Bedford residents were as high as 343 parts per billion. Ninety-nine percent of Americans have PCB levels of less than 30 ppb.

Although the harbor has been closed to fishing for several years, the problem of human exposure still exists. Enforcement of a fishing ban in an area of this size is difficult, if not impossible. Access to severely contaminated areas is still possible and unsafe air levels still persist.

It is imperative that work begin immediately to establish the parameters of the problem and to agree on the correct course of remedial action. In order to ensure that New Bedford receives the urgent attention it deserves, Agency personnel should be assigned full-time to the Harbor contamination problem. Funding is also needed to obtain qualified consulting services to evaluate and recommend various remedial alternatives.

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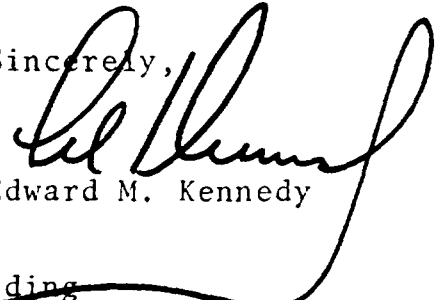
Ms. Anne Gorsuch
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Much of the testing and preliminary assessment data must be collected during the summer months. Therefore, it is essential that your office either immediately include this site on the Superfund list (prior to the anticipated release this fall of the expanded priority list), or that alternative means of funding are provided. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your timely response.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,


Edward M. Kennedy

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Boston, Massachusetts 02203